

---

# A BETTER PROGRAMME FOR MENTORING YOUTHS

Caleb Amboga Atuya





The Kenya Livestock Producers Association (KLPA) is working to institutionalise the experience capitalization approach in its M&E department by developing specific Terms of Reference (TOR) which will be used in the ongoing and subsequent projects that KLPA is engaged in. KLPA is an apex farmer organisation, formed in 2004 with the aim of helping farmers with market linkages, conducting farmer trainings on various value chains, and lobbying and advocacy. In 2017, KLPA partnered with Mkulima Faida Africa and started the DIGIFARM project. The aim is to help young people in agricultural value chains share their success stories and encourage more youths to create value in the sector.

Seventy percent of Kenya's economy depends on agriculture, and thirty out of Kenya's 47 counties are actively involved in agriculture. However, the sector faces many challenges as many best farming practices are not sufficiently adopted by smallholder farmers. This is largely the result of an inadequate extension service – one that does not pay sufficient attention to the positive results of many research and development initiatives.

A couple of years ago, three colleagues and I felt there was a need to form an organisation that would focus on capacity building and on mentorship programmes that would support the adoption of farming practices proved to be successful and of

climate-smart agriculture techniques, in both crop and livestock value chains. Targeting youth in the agricultural sector, we established Mkulima Faida Africa as a sister organisation of KLPA. Our aim was to share young people's success stories to encourage other youths to start embracing agriculture and digital farming.

Mkulima Faida Africa primarily mentors and trains youths in agricultural value chains, helping them to document and share their success stories using the experience capitalization process. This involves identifying, analysing and documenting experiences to encourage an exchange of good practices and lessons learnt. In this way, we promote the adoption of best farming practices by other youths in the region.

In September 2017, KLPA and Mkulima Faida Africa – in partnership with Safaricom, iProcure, Mercy Corps and Arifu – started a project called DIGIFARM. The idea was to tackle those issues that cut across smallholder crop and livestock farming, and to document the process using experience capitalization so that the lessons and solutions are shared with other young people. DIGIFARM has focused on the general access to information, the need for an input loan facility, or the importance of markets for the local products. To tackle all of these challenges, the team began with a pilot project in eight counties in September 2017, namely, Bomet,

*Cover* Gathering information meant going to the field with the M&E team





*Above A training session with different extension officers*

Kericho, Kirinyaga, Makueni, Marakwet, Meru, Migori and Nyandarua. The selected counties include both arid and semi-arid areas. We successfully achieved our aim of reaching one million farmers by the end of the 6-month pilot programme.

### **Institutionalising experience capitalization within KLPA**

KLPA mainly uses traditional reporting tools, but after the training process organised by CTA on experience capitalization, I understood the need to implement this process and complement our M&E activities. We think this can help us in terms of data collection, data analysis and documentation. The experience capitalization process can also help

KLPA and other organisations write and publish their project success stories. With the knowledge gathered from CTA in March 2017 in Arusha, I felt the need to start incorporating experience capitalization into all of KLPA's projects.

The first critical step was to identify the departments and colleagues who could help us promote the experience capitalization process within our organisation. Recognising that the M&E and information systems departments have a key role in the process, I was able to recruit two colleagues from the M&E department to join our team. Next, we did an internal presentation and briefed our colleagues in the M&E department, showing what an experience capitalization process is all about and highlighting its potential benefits to the organisation. After the brief,

The aim of the training was to equip our colleagues with relevant knowledge on experience capitalization.





*Left Sharing information about the experience capitalization approach with our partners*

After conducting our internal experience capitalization training, we started documenting the case of an older project working on climate-smart agriculture, and making the necessary arrangements for sharing the final article that we were working on. At this point, we felt it was time to approach KLPA management and try to convince them to adopt experience capitalization. We scheduled a meeting in December 2017 and took the managers through the experience capitalization process. At first we had difficulties convincing the organisation to adopt it due to budget constraints, as training a lot of people would have been very expensive. But as we had volunteered to spearhead the process within the M&E department, after a series of lengthy meetings, we were permitted to pilot the experience capitalization process in the DIGIFARM project, which I was leading. For this, we were allowed to ride on the project's budget.

### **Implementing experience capitalization in DIGIFARM**

One of the aims of this project was to increase farmers' access to inputs, which required opening DIGIFARM depots in villages, where farmers are able to buy what they needed at an affordable price. The depots are able to provide relatively cheap inputs by sourcing them directly from the manufacturers. This has helped farmers to save a lot on input costs and boosted their yields. The consequent increase in their incomes has encouraged farmers to embrace agriculture as a business. We felt that it was important for us to document this experience because many organisations in the past have tried such projects, but there has rarely been reports that effectively convey the lessons learnt.

We decided to gather all of the documents that talked about experience capitalization on the e-mails shared by the members of the COP, and to collect the insights that we received from those implementing experience capitalization processes in other countries, to guide us through the documentation process. We resolved to develop a capitalization strategy, draft some TORs and prepare a training manual to support the process within KLPA. With this in place, we were ready to document the experiences of the DIGIFARM project.

they also saw the need to incorporate experience capitalization in our daily project activities, and many agreed to join a two-week training process, in November 2017.

To conduct the training we used write ups and training materials from the previous CTA workshops and from the experience capitalization community of practice (COP) – the online group of individuals from all over the world sharing information about the experience capitalization approach. The aim of the training was to equip our colleagues with relevant knowledge on experience capitalization. We envisaged that if our colleagues bought into the idea, then it could be easier to convince our bosses that we should start new capitalization processes across the organisation, as we would have already started this within some of the existing projects. We then planned to start sharing the success stories coming from these projects with other colleagues and external partners. During these initial stages, we had the advantage that our bosses had given us leeway to bring in new ideas and develop them, and I was able to share with them the article that I had completed during the workshops ran by CTA.



But before the experience capitalization could start, I felt there was a need to train the various stakeholders (partners, farmer leaders and county government officials) who were directly involved in the project. This was challenging, since most of them did not understand the importance of the experience capitalization process, or the need to get started. Arifu, an organisation that uses technology platforms to educate smallholder farmers, was a notable exception.

Arifu was impressed with our work and with the different steps taken as part of the DIGIFARM project. As a result, they were willing and ready to join the experience capitalization process. Arifu mobilised their colleagues from various departments and asked them to include it in their day-to-day activities. We conducted a one-day workshop on experience capitalization in January 2018, where we introduced the concept and helped the Arifu team get ready to implement the process. Fifteen staff from the M&E and communications departments attended the workshop.

## Challenges

The challenges we faced during included:

- The lack of commitment to the process by various partners in the DIGIFARM project;
- The need for the M&E team to have a digital data collection tool to help retrieve the right data. There were no funds to get an external developer to come up such a system, but we received assistance from the internal ICT team, who developed a data collection system;
- The time needed: an experience capitalization process is time consuming, especially because of the need to train other stakeholders who oversee the DIGIFARM project in our absence in the various counties;
- The lack of funds for capacity building and training of staff on experience capitalization.

*Right “We have seen that an experience capitalization process goes an extra mile when documenting the successful stories of projects...”*



I am happy to report that experience capitalization is an ongoing effort at KLPA, even after I left the organisation to join Mkulima Faida Africa.

---

The positive response to experience capitalization by Arifu has given us hope that more partners will come on board. We recently asked Arifu to identify other colleagues who would need to be trained on experience capitalization. Then we will organise another one-week training workshop with them, going through the different steps: from data collection and documentation to writing and publishing an article.

Until now, the reports and documents that cover the first phase of DIGIFARM (after the steps of data collection, field visits, data analysis and writing) are much better and include more details than those produced as part of a “regular” M&E report. During the process, we noticed that M&E is generally more about facts and gathering data, unlike experience capitalization, which captures and analyses the information available.

All in all, the experience capitalization process was successful because a few of my colleagues joined the training courses, and had vast knowledge of the whole process. As a result, Mkulima Faida Africa is currently developing a framework document for the institutionalization of experience capitalization. We have also made a resolution to develop concept notes, which we will share with NGOs and farmer organisations to help them adopt this approach.

### **Recommendations**

We have seen that an experience capitalization process goes an extra mile when documenting the successful stories of projects, rather than depending on standard day-to-day M&E reports that usually leave a lot of insights uncaptured. Since the introduction of the experience capitalization approach to East African organisations in 2016 and 2017, there have been a lot of articles describing different methods to institutionalise this approach. However, there is need to get more organisations to follow the recommendations in these articles and to implement the process as part of their work.

I am happy to report that experience capitalization is an ongoing effort at KLPA, even after I left the organisation to join Mkulima Faida Africa. The only remaining challenge is a lack of funds to hire an editor to review our cases and publish the articles and stories that we have written so that we can share them with the rest of the world. KLPA is also planning to start an online information sharing tool to help it reach a larger number of people. This will soon be available.





*Above Sharing the lessons learnt with other young people*

As an organisation that works with small-scale farmers, KLPA needs to fully institutionalise the experience capitalization process. This will help it to identify gaps in its data collection and documentation processes, and also identify the way to fill these gaps and share many success stories with the rest of the world, particularly with other organisations implementing similar projects. CTA needs to assist organisations that have already started to draw and share lessons by training their staff, with international workshops and with guidebooks.



**Caleb Amboga Atuya** works as project coordinator at Mkulima Faida Africa in Kenya. He has over 4 years' experience working with smallholder farmers. The most recent project that he has been actively involved in is dubbed DIGIFARM.

*E-mail: [calebatuya@gmail.com](mailto:calebatuya@gmail.com)*

This is one of the results of the process started by the "Capitalization of Experiences for Greater Impact in Rural Development" project, implemented by CTA, FAO and IICA and supported by IFAD.  
<http://experience-capitalization.cta.int>

Country: Kenya  
Region: East Africa  
Date: June 2019  
Keywords: youth; dissemination; communications; training